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Georgia Southern University Athletics



Women's Basketball Makes Strides In First Week Of Practice

Head coach Anita Howard sees definite progress with the mixture of newcomers and returners for 2020-21

Women's Basketball

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STATESBORO - Georgia Southern women's basketball hit the floor for the first time as a team this week and Head Coach [Anita Howard](#) was pleased with what she saw from the Eagles in Hanner Fieldhouse through the first seven days of team practice.

The biggest challenge so far has been integrating the eight newcomers with the eight returners from last season's squad, but Coach Howard is excited with what the newcomers have brought to the team - and to the practices.

"First, it's refreshing and exciting to finally get them all on the court together," Coach Howard said. "We've been recruiting this class for some time now, and we've gotten to know them a bit differently than the returners when I first got here. But to see them all together on the floor - for one, we look much bigger in size. We look more like a real basketball team. Then, with the energy they bring. They're all coming from winning programs and it's just a different kind of feel. You'll always catch one of them in the gym working, and they're always coming by the office to watch film. There's a different level of excitement spilling over to the returners. It's a renewed sense of competitive greatness, I think. And during the practices so far, you see that we compete extremely hard at everything. There's a fresh energy in the gym, and it's an exciting feel."

The size that Coach Howard touched on is evident just by looking at the roster - nine of the 16 players listed stand 5-11 or taller. So seeing them all on the court for the first time puts it into perspective just how much bigger the Eagles are at each position heading into 2020-21.

"Playing a season in the Sun Belt showed me a lot of things," Coach Howard said. "Teams, like UT Arlington, were huge. And also how we had to rebound every night at different positions. So I knew that one of the things we wanted to do, was to get a little bigger at each position. [Lacy Robins](#), for example, is a 6-foot point guard who can also play the two, which then gives you a 6-foot 2-guard. And being bigger at every position helps on the defensive end. I've noticed that we're getting a lot of deflections. And our defensive rotation looks a bit better because we're bigger - it's more like a Syracuse type of 2-3 zone, rather than your run-of-the-mill type of 2-3 zone. And then there's the rebounding - that was key for us when we were winning early on. I knew we needed to get bigger, to get more possessions with rebounds. On the offensive end, we can shoot over opponents, we can post up opponents from the guard position and not just the post position. And then of course there's that size on the inside. We went against some strong opposition in the Sun Belt with legit centers. So we now have people who can defend. We're young, but we have the bodies and the frames to compete at that level."

One important part of the first week of practice was naming the team captains for 2020-21. And it was a unanimous selection for the three captains for this upcoming season - senior [A'Tyanna Gaulden](#) and juniors [Tsubasa Nisbet](#) and [Jordan Strange](#).

Congratulations to our three team captains for the season, as voted on unanimously by their teammates: [@jstran_1](#) [@AtyannaGaulden](#) [@tsubasa_nisbet5](#) [#HailSouthern](#) | [#GATA](#) [pic.twitter.com/Jw0uiW53gW](#)

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"It's our tradition," Coach Howard said about the selection of the team captains. "Our players vote, and it's a completely player-run thing. It's not just based on what they do on the court. It's how they are in the locker room, how they do with community service. It's quite like a job interview. The team unanimously voted for [A'Tyanna Gaulden](#). I don't think it was solely because she was a Power 5 transfer. She is one of our hardest workers, and as any successful coach knows, if one of your better players is one of your harder workers, it says a lot about your team. Our two returners, Basa [Nisbet] and Jordan [Strange] - Basa is a born leader. She comes in, works hard and talks all the time. She's just a great teammate. And it's the same thing with Jordan. Jordan didn't play a lot of minutes for us last year, but she was probably the best inspiration when she wasn't in the game, or when she was in practice. I think we have three captains where it's not about what their production on the court is going to be, but it's about how they're going to uplift everyone around them. We had a practice yesterday where we re-did some drills from the day before. We let the captains run them, and that was the best we'd seen in practice even with the coaches. I joked, 'Maybe we should let the captains run practice from now on!' But they got something out of them that we couldn't get out of them. It's a great feeling when the players can coach themselves."

Georgia Southern women's basketball continues preparing for the 2020-21 season with practice this week.

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